



# *The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

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### Patrick Administration Protects 240 acres in Webster

*Acquisition Expands Mine Brook Wildlife Management Area to over 1,000 acres,  
Creating an 8,000-acre Natural Habitat Reserve In Two States*

BOSTON – Two hundred forty acres of significant wildlife habitat in Webster that had been slated for an 83-lot subdivision instead has become part of an unfragmented 8,000-acre ecological landscape that protects and promotes biodiversity in two states, Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Ian Bowles announced today.

The Department of Fish and Game's (DFG) \$2.5 million purchase of the land from Barrett Financial Corp. adds to the Commonwealth's Mine Brook Wildlife Management Area (WMA), and ensures permanent protection of this former Webster Sheet Metal property from development. The newly expanded 1,000-acre Mine Brook WMA now connects to the 5,000-acre Douglas State Forest, which in turn links with Rhode Island's 2,000 acre Buck Hill Management Area – creating an 8,000-acre block of contiguous conservation land straddling the borders of Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

“This land purchase adds to a valuable natural resource and expands opportunities for people to enjoy the great outdoors in Central Massachusetts,” said Lieutenant Governor Tim Murray.

“This acquisition exemplifies one of the three major priorities Governor Patrick has set for land protection: preservation of the Commonwealth's largest remaining unfragmented forests, and the habitat, species, and ecology these wildlands support,” Secretary Bowles said. “I am very pleased to announce the acquisition of this remarkable parcel, which allows us to expand an incredibly valuable ecological and recreational resource and protect it in perpetuity.”

In his five year capital plan announced in August, Governor Patrick set out three broad goals for land conservation: maintaining large remaining blocks of undisturbed natural habitat, preserving working landscapes in agricultural and forestry use, and creating major new urban parks.

Governor Patrick's commitment to land conservation – at least \$50 million per year for five years – is the largest of any Governor on record. In December, Governor Patrick filed a \$1.4 billion 2008 Energy and Environment Bond Bill to authorize borrowing of \$355 million for land conservation – up from \$250 million in the last environmental bond bill (2002). The Webster land purchase demonstrates the ecological value of prioritizing undisturbed natural landscapes for conservation, under the Patrick Administration's Commonwealth Habitat Reserves initiative.

“Conservation of this property protects critical rare species habitat that had been identified as a high priority for protection by the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program,” said DFG Commissioner Mary Griffin. “The Mine Brook Wildlife Management Area and the other protected land parcels in the region support wildlife species such as white-tailed deer, wild turkey, ruffed grouse, fisher, gray fox, and various salamanders. In addition, the large, unfragmented, forested block is important for Neotropical migrant birds such as scarlet tanagers, rose-breasted grosbeaks and broad-winged hawks. Resident birds such as pileated and red-bellied woodpeckers, white-breasted nuthatch, brown creeper and barred owl will also benefit from this acquisition.”

DFG's Division of Fisheries & Wildlife targets its land conservation program at the most ecologically valuable habitats in Massachusetts. The Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program gave the Webster land high marks for its diverse mix of woodland and wetland habitats, including perched wetlands, bogs, and several intermittent streams, and identified it as estimated and priority habitat for rare species.

DFG's Division of Fisheries and Wildlife manages nearly 170,000 acres in the Commonwealth, including more than 37,200 acres in the Central Wildlife District. DFG spent \$7.6 million to protect more than 4,000 acres statewide in fiscal year 2007, including 850 acres in the Central Wildlife District. The agency utilizes state open space bond funds and revenue from the Wildlands Stamp for land purchases. In the current fiscal year, the Patrick Administration has allocated up to \$10 million in capital funds to the department to focus on priority land acquisitions.

“I'm pleased that the Administration has proceeded with this significant acquisition in Webster, further adding to and protecting the area's natural beauty,” said Sen. Richard T. Moore. “Expanding the Mine Brook WMA and connecting it with the Douglas State Forest ensures that the region's valuable wildlife and environmental resources, including Webster Lake, will be protected.”

“The tremendous investment to protect the Douglas State Forest years ago makes this a natural acquisition for the state, and will enhance the area where people can come for recreation purposes and be given the chance to experience one of the most beautiful areas in the state,” said Rep. Paul Kujawski. “I am very pleased that the Patrick Administration took this initiative to protect and enhance our open space.”

“I am pleased that land conservation has taken a priority with the Patrick Administration as opposed to past administrations,” said Sen. Pamela Resor, Senate chair of the Joint Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture Committee. “This is a very prudent initiative which will have a positive affect on the Commonwealth's wildlife population for generations to come.”

“I applaud this addition to the Mine Brook Wildlife Management Area,” said Rep. Frank Smizik, House chair of the Committee. “Forest land conservation benefits our air and water quality, preserves wildlife habitat, and improves our standard of living in the Commonwealth.”

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